

Two days afterward proceedings were begun.

Eight hundred and thirty-two persons had been accused of being parties to the offense of spreading abroad the contents of the libelous sheet. As a matter of course the editor was first indicted, then the assistant editors, the publishers, the owners of the printing office, the printers, the folders, the compositors and the proofreaders, the janitors; also his wife, who had brought him his breakfast and so refreshed him that he was able to take part in such scandalous doings. The porter of the building did not escape, for had he not allowed the bundles of papers to be carried out without a protest? Neither were the women who carried the papers overlooked, nor the postal authorities who forwarded them by mail, nor the railway officials down to the engineer, for they all had assisted in bringing it before the public.

This, however, made only 180 accused persons, and more were needed. But Chi Hung Lang, with long, long head, was a man of resources. He then indicted the cheese and sausage merchants who had wrapped their wares in this number of the paper, the manufacturer of the paper on which the edition was printed and all his establishment, including his traveling salesmen, the man who delivered the ink; also his mother-in-law, for it was plain that these all had had a hand in the affair.

Next on the list were the waiters at the restaurants who had handed this copy of The Dragon Claw to the guests, a street car conductor in whose car a passenger had read the paper, an optician who had sold eyeglasses to a near-sighted man and so helped him to read the wicked article, the family of the physician of the editor who had cured the latter of influenza three days before and made it possible for him to return to his work and break the law as he had done. Fifty-seven men who had read the article to their wives was quite a respectable addition to the list, and in natural order followed 57 wives who, with malicious giggling, had heard the news thus read.

Finally the parents of the editor were indicted for bringing such a monster into the world and the editor's brother for not having exercised a better influence over him.

This brother, however, was released. He was deaf, dumb and blind.

Eight hundred and thirty-two persons were sentenced to various terms of imprisonment and to more or less severe flogging with the bamboo. The fine new prison was now filled to the roof with the exception of a single cell. In this one the writer of the scandalous article very properly belonged, but, unfortunately, after all these legal proceedings he could not be found.

The vicerey came. The inhabitants of the town, as many as were out of prison, crowded the streets and cried as if possessed: "Hurrah! Hurrah!" for it had been announced that those who did not shout and those that remained in their houses would be properly punished.

The vicerey inspected the prison, saw a man or woman sitting in each cell and was highly pleased. The automatic flogging machine worked without a single hitch, and the hydraulic galleys exceeded the highest expectations of the illustrious inspector. He had heard of the whole-sale convictions, and, delighted with Chi Hung Lang's sagacity, he handed him the second peacock feather and the red button. Then he said:

"But tell me, tiger of the lawbook, why is this cell empty? One more would have made very little difference."

Chi Hung Lang was not only a lawyer of the shrewdest kind, but also a diplomat, so he answered: "We knew no one else that could be indicted without the appearance of slight injustice. Perhaps your wisdom, O most noble one, is able to name still another who deserves punishment."

The most noble one slowly closed his left eye, and with a very cunning look he said:

"Tell me, Chi Hung Lang, tiger of the lawbook, how does this atrocious article read?"

Chi Hung Lang carried the paper in his pocket and made haste to read it to his noble master. As he finished reading the vicerey said with a smile: "That is not so bad, for between you and me, you know your wife wears No. 9. But here we have another who has helped spread abroad this wicked article, and he must be imprisoned."

"And who is it, O most high one?" asked Chi Hung Lang as he bowed in amazement at the wisdom of the vicerey until his eye curled on the ground between his feet.

"You yourself, tiger of the lawbook, for you have just read the paper to me. About 13 days and 12 blows on your feet, I think, eh?" said the imperial inspector jovially.

"You are the wisest of all wise ones; your wisdom has no bounds," replied Chi Hung Lang, a trifle disconcerted. Then he bowed again to the ear, took hold of his eye, led himself into the only vacant cell and with his own hands took off his shoes.—From the German in Short Stories.

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